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## CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

### THE USE OF THE THAYER MODELS IN THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

The placing in the Children's Museum of the Thayer groups illustrating nature camouflage has created a very considerable interest in the minds of our adult visitors, and frequently provoked the question, "How do you use them in the Museum?"

Those of us who are doing practical work with the children find that this question answers itself through the pupils who visit the cases. Let us suppose a sixth grade class comes to the Museum for a talk on armor. There is usually also a desire to see the Children's Museum. When the children come, we usually find them somewhat excited over the trip, a little intense because of a break in the daily routine, showing an eager desire to see everything and look at nothing. The immediate problem is to center the attention of the pupils, to make them want to look, and look with quietness at a given object.

At once the nature models automatically solve the first half of this difficulty. They center attention because of the familiar character of the material, and because of their intrinsic charm of form and color. After a word of explanation the children are on their knees hunting for a frog hidden in brown leaves, counting grey moths against rough tree trunks, and finding birds seemingly concealed but actually in plain sight among the branches. The children have unconsciously reached the desire to pause and to observe carefully. They have reached a good museum frame of mind.

This museum frame of mind may be strengthened by letting the children into the secret of their having attained it. We may ask, "Why did you come to the Museum?" "To see the armor." They came to see. One of the purposes of the Museum is to help the children to the intelligent use of their eyes. The children seem to understand and are amused to realize that their scattered attention has been caught unconsciously and centered. They are now ready for more concentrated work in the galleries.

Another use of the Thayer material is in tracing to its source in nature the inspiration of forms conventionalized by artists. The floral bird forms of the Children's Museum are seen again in the gallery of Decorative Arts simplified by the artist in a Gothic tapestry in which there is a wealth of flowers and animal forms in the foreground adapted to the craft and

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permeated with the spirit of its age. Again the following incident is significant. A child was attempting to draw a wood duck in one of the Thayer cases and became confused by the gayety of color and the surrounding foliage. He was sent to look at a little wax duck in the Egyptian collection where this same form simplified in the hands of a craftsman immediately removed his difficulty.

Every day children draw from this material singly or in groups. While most of them do it apparently for the pleasure of representation there are some few older ones who use their drawings as a basis for tiles and textile pattern in their school work. Thus they definitely create for themselves a clear sense of the large field of conventional design.

From the standpoint of handling large groups of children and that of the development of the aesthetic appreciation of the individual child, these models give promise of great value in art education, even now while their use is experimental and their implications and connections largely untried. Katharine Gibson

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?

The Cleveland Museum of Art opened its doors to the public on June seventh, 1916, and in the six and a half years ending December seventh 1,634,150 visitors had passed through its doors. These visitors include men, women and children of every race and condition. They have come with every incentive, from idle curiosity to serious study, and have received from the Museum and its collections a widely varying message of inspiration, of increased understanding of beauty or of historic fact.

The staff of the Museum has gradually increased until we now have, in addition to the Director, six Curators, with assistants, who give their time to caring for and studying the collections and interpreting them to the public, either in a general way through labels, the *Bulletin* and magazine articles, and lectures, or through particular study with individuals who wish to have a more intimate knowledge of special objects.

The visitor to the Museum usually takes away from it just as much as his experience has prepared him to absorb. The aim is to increase in every possible way the attractiveness of the message the objects have to give. This is, of course, done primarily through careful gallery arrangement to enhance the beauty of each object and to indicate its significance. This first aesthetic